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# BEFO' DE WAR

*ECHOES IN NEGRO DIALECT*

# IN OLE VIRGINIA

*MARSE CHAN, AND OTHER STORIES*

BY

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

---

*Including "Unc' Edinburg's Drowndin'," "Meh Lady," "Ole 'Stracted," "No Haid Pawn," and "Polly"*

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Cloth, 12mo, $1.25

# BEFO' DE WAR

*Echoes in Negro Dialect*

BY

A. C. GORDON

AND

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1888

C3907781

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TROW'S
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY,
NEW YORK.

PS3513
0573 B4
1888
MAIN

To

THE MEMORY OF

IRWIN RUSSELL

WHO AWOKE THE

FIRST ECHO

5411

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## UNCLE GABE'S WHITE FOLKS.

Sarvent, Marster! Yes, sah, dat's me—
  Ole Unc' Gabe's my name;
I thankee, Marster, I'm 'bout, yo' see.
  "An' de ole 'ooman?" She's much de same,
Po'ly an' 'plainin', thank de Lord!
But de Marster's gwine ter come back from 'broad.

"Fine ole place?" Yes, sah, 'tis so;
  An' mighty fine people my white folks war—
But you ought ter 'a' seen it years ago,
  When de Marster an' de Mistis lived up dyah;
When de niggers 'd stan' all roun' de do',
Like grains o' corn on de cornhouse flo'.

"Live mons'ous high?" Yes, Marster, yes;
Cut'n' onroyal 'n' gordly dash;
Eat an' drink till you couldn' res'.
My folks war'n' none o' yo' po'-white-trash;
Nor, sah, dey was ob high degree—
Dis heah nigger am quality!

"Tell you 'bout 'em?" You mus' 'a' hearn
'Bout my ole white folks, sho'!
I tell you, suh, dey was gre't an' stern;
D' didn' have nuttin' at all to learn;
D' knowed all dar was to know;
Gol' ober de' head an' onder dey feet;
An' silber! dey sowed 't like folks sows wheat.

"Use ter be rich?" Dat warn' de wud!
Jes' wallowed an' roll' in wealf.
Why, none o' my white folks ever stir'd
Ter lif' a han' for d'self;

De niggers use ter be stan'in' roun'
Jes' d' same ez leaves when dey fus' fall down ;
De stable-stalls up heah at home
Looked like teef in a fine-toof comb ;
De cattle was p'digious—mus' tell de fac' !
An' de hogs mecked de hill-sides look like black ;
An' de flocks ob sheep was so gre't an' white
Dey 'peared like clouds on a moonshine night.
An' when my ole Mistis use' ter walk—
*Jes'* ter her kerridge (dat was fur
Ez ever she walked)—I tell you, sir,
You could almos' heah her silk dress talk ;
Hit use' ter soun' like de mornin' breeze,
When it wakes an' rustles de Gre't House trees.
An' de Marster's face !—de Marster's face,
Whenever de Marster got right pleased—
Well, I 'clar' ter Gord, 'twould shine wid grace
De same ez his countenance had been greased.
De cellar, too, had de bes' ob wine,

An' brandy, an' sperrits dat yo' could fine ;
An' ev'ything in dyah was stored,
'Skusin' de Glory of de Lord !

"Warn' dyah a son ? " Yes, sah, you knows
*He's* de young Marster now ;
But we heah dat dey tooken he very clo'es
Ter pay what ole Marster owe ;
He's done been gone ten year, I s'pose.
But he's comin' back some day, of co'se ;
An' my ole 'ooman is aluz pyard,
An' meckin' de Blue-Room baid ;
An' ev'ry day dem sheets is ayard,
An' will be till *she's* daid ;
An' de styars she'll scour,
An' dat room she'll ten',
Ev'y blessed day dat de Lord do sen' !

What say, Marster ? Yo' say, you knows—?
He's young an' slender-like an' fyah ;

Better-lookin' 'n you, of co'se!
Hi! you's he? 'Fo' Gord, 'tis him!
'Tis de very voice an' eyes an' hyah,
An' mouf an' smile, on'y yo' ain' so slim—
I wonder whah—whah's de ole 'ooman?
Now let my soul
Depart in peace,
For I behol'
Dy glory, Lord!—I knowed you, chile—
I knowed you soon's I see'd your face!
Whar has you been dis blessed while?
Done come back an' buy de place?
Oh, bless de Lord for all his grace!
De ravins shell hunger, an' shell not lack
De Marster, de young Marster's done come back!

## NIGGER-TWIS'.

RIGHT hard work while it lasts—dat's so—
Worruming 'backer all day long ;
Miz'ry gits in yer back, you know,
Speshly dem what ain't so strong.
Dat's my fix. But it seems ter me
Ise paid fur it all when it comes ter dis :
My long-stem pipe, little Jake on my knee,
An' my pocket chock full o' nigger-twis'.

"Corn-cob ?" Yes, sir. It ain't so fine
As dat 'hogany-colored one o' yourn ;
But I gits as much out o' dis o' mine
As de fines' one you ever did own.

De juice all dries in de cob, you see—
Dat's de philos'phy o' pipes like dis ;
An' a reed-root stem is de stem fur me,
An' de sweetes' 'backer is nigger-twis'.

Dem dar's cur'us things, sho' 'nuf—
Dem little splinters what lights jes' so ;
Hit dey heads whar de box are rough
A sort o' hard—an' away dey go !
I never liked 'em. It seems ter me
De devil's in 'em some way. An' dis
Is jes' as good an' as true, you see—
A red-hot coal on de nigger-twis'.

"Wouldn' I like a cigar ?" you say.
No, sir, I thank you. Ise tried dem dar—
Diff'rent, sir, as de night from day ;
Fur apart as a cuss an' pra'r ;

Hasn't no strength, it seems ter me:
Can't begin to compar' wid dis;
Nothin' onder de sun can be
Sweet as a cob an' some nigger-twis'.

No—dat nuther! Well, I'll declar'!
Dat is de beatenes' Ise seed yet!
What is de name dat you call dat 'ar?
Say it again, please? "Cigarette?"
Little Jake, what sets on my knee,
'Ud turn up his nose at a thing like dis;
Ise gwine ter teach him ter do like me,
An' suck de comfort from nigger-twis'.

Yes, dat's a fac'! 'Tis a lux'ry, sho',
'Backer is, whatever you say.
Seems like I never wants nothin' mo',
'Ceptin' ter set down here dis way,

Take little Jake up on my knee,
Have me a corn-cob pipe like dis,
Wid a stem as long as from you ter me,
An' a pocket chock full o' nigger-twis'.

## KYARLINA JIM.

(*Fisherman's Hut, Chesapeake Bay*, 1876.)

When you was here, some sixteen year
Or so aback, you says,
A darkey named Kyarlina Jim
He fished f'om dis here place?

Dat yonder's him—Kyarlina Jim—
On de bench dar by de do';
He have been ole an' weak an' bline
Sence dat long time ago.

Yes, dat's de way he spen's each day
O' de blessed year, 'dout fail;
Wid face turned out'ards to'ds de Bay,
Like watchin' fur a sail.

Eben when clouds 'ull come in crowds,
An' beatin' win's 'ull blow,
He still keeps settin' pashunt dar
In his ole place by de do'.

An' de sweet sunlight, 'tis jes' like night
Ter po' Kyarlina Jim ;
He's weak an' bline, an' rain an' shine
Is all de same ter him.

Dat chile you see dar on his knee,
She never fails ter come,
About dis time o' ev'ry day,
Ter fetch Kyarlina home.

I seldom cries ; but when my eyes
Lights on de chile an' Jim,
Dar's sumpin' sort o' makes me feel
Kind ter his gal an' him.

Another chile he los', long while
Ago, Ise heerd him say,
Is out dar waitin' in a boat,
On de blue waves o' de Bay.

I 'spec's, beca'se o' what he says,
Dat chile he los' 'ull come
'Fo' long, jes' like dis here one does,
An' fetch Kyarlina home.

## "DE OLE 'OMAN AN' ME."

We doesn't live as onst we did :
De grub's done struck a change ;
An' when I mentions ash-cake now,
My wife she thinks it strange.

She's got sot-up dese las' few years,
An' wheat-bread's all de go ;
But, somehow, seems I'd like ter tas'e
Some ask-cake-pone onst mo'.

De buttermilk has done give way
Ter tea an' coffee now ;
"An' possum-fat," she always says,
"Is low-flung grub, nohow!"

She doesn' ever foot it now,
  Like how she used ter do;
But drives my yaller mule ter town,
  An' wushes he was two!

She hasn' had a homespun coat
  For many a long day,
But w'ars de fines' sort o' clo'es,
  Made jes' de white folks' way.

She doesn' call me "Ichabod,"
  Or "Ich," or "Ole Fool," now;
An' ef I mentioned "Anniky,"
  'T 'ud sartin raise a row.

'Tis "Mister Brown" an' "Mistis Brown,"
  Ontwel it seems ter me
We's done gone changed our nat'rel selves
  F'om what we used ter be.

I know, beca'se as how Ise tried
An' never seed it gee,
It's awful hard ter teach new tricks
Ter ole dogs sich as me.

Dat broad-clof coat she made me buy,
It don't feel half so good
As dat ole jeans I used ter w'ar
A-cuttin' Marster's wood.

An' beefsteak ain't for sich as me,
Instid o' possum-fat;
An' "Mister Brown" ain't "Ichabod"—
I can't git over dat!

So Mistis Brown may go ter town,
A drivin' o' dat mule,
Jes' when she likes; but, sartin sho',
*I* ain't gwi' play de fool!

An' as fur her insistin' how
Dat I should try ter learn
Dem A B C's de chillun reads—
'Tis no consarn o' her'n.

I doesn' keer what grub she eats,
Or what she calls herself,
Or ef she has a bofy now
'Stid o' a cubbud-shelf;

I doesn' keer how fine her clo'es,
May be, or what's de style—
I'm able fur ter pay fur dat,
An' has been so some while.

Dar's only one o' all her ways
Gits over me fur sho'—
I p'int'ly hones fur possum-fat
An' ash-cake-pone onst mo'

## ZEKYL'S INFIDELITY.

Mistis, I r'al'y wish you'd hole
A little conversation
Wid my old Zekyl 'bout his soul.
Dat nigger's sitiwation
Is mons'us serious, 'deed 'n' 'tis,
'Skusin' he change dat co'se o' his.

Dat evil sinner's sot he face
Gin ev'y wud I know;
Br'er Gabrul say, he's fell from grace,
An' Hell is got him sho'.

He don' believe in sperits,
'Skusin' 'tis out a jug!

Say 'tain' got no mo' merits
Den a ole half-cured lug;
'N' dat white cat I see right late,
One evelin' nigh de grave-yard gate,
Warn' nuttin' sep some ole cat whar
Wuz sot on suppin' off old hyah.

He 'oont allow a rooster,
By crowin' in folks' do',
Kin bring death dyah; and useter
Say, he wish mine would crow.
An' he even say, a hin mout try,
Sep women-folks would git so spry,
An' want to stick deeselves up den,
An' try to crow over de men.

Say 'tain' no good in preachin';
Dat niggers is sich fools—
Don' know no mo' 'bout teachin'
'N white folks does 'bout mules;

An' when br'er Gabrul's hollered tell
You mos' kin see right into Hell,
An' rambled Scriptures fit to bus',
Dat hard-mouf nigger's wus an' wus.

Say quality (dis is mainer
'N all Ise told you yit)—
Says 'tain' no better 'n 'arf-strainer ;
An' dat *his* master'll git
Good place in Heaven—po' white folks, mark !—
As y'all whar come right out de ark ;
An' dat—now jes' heah dis !—dat he,
A po'-white-folks' nigger's good as me !

He's gwine straight to de deble !
An' sarve him jes' right, too !
He's a outdacious rebel,
Arter all Ise done do !—
Ise sweat an' arguified an' blowed
Over dat black nigger mo'

'N would 'a' teck a c'nal-boat load
Over to Canyan sho'!

Ise tried *refection*—'twarn' no whar!
Ise wrastled wid de Lord in pra'r;
Ise quoiled tell I wuz mos' daid;
Ise th'owed de spider at his haid—
But he ole haid 'twuz so thick th'oo
Hit bus' my skillit spang in two.

You kin dye black hyah an' meck it light;
You kin tu'n de Ethiope's spots to white;
You mout grow two or three cubits bigger—
But you carn't onchange a po'-white-folks' nigger.
When you's dwellin' on golden harps an' chunes,
A po'-white-folks' nigger's thinkin' 'bout coons;
An' when you's snifflin' de heaven'y blossoms,
A po'-white-folks' nigger's studyin' 'bout possums.

## OLE LAUGHIN'.

When I was a boy in Ferginyer,
At de plantation down on de Jeems,
Years aback 'fo' de war kim, an' freedom—
What a long time ago it all seems!—
My Marster he owned an ole nigger
Dat de white folks, beca'se o' his mouf,
Never called nothin' 'ceptin' "Ole Laughin',"
Down dar in de Souf.

He had de mos' cur'uses' notions
'Bout jokin' an' havin' o' fun;
An' dar wasn't no stoppin' dat darkey,
Ef ever he onst had begun.

Ise seed him like bustin' his weskit
A-laughin' at things dat most folk—
Spite o' whatever funny *he* foun' dar—
Never 'sidered a joke.

He would laugh when his chillun was cryin',
He would laugh when de cryin' was done;
Seems like evvything struck him ridic'l'us
Dat de Lord has made onder de sun;
An' whatever frolic dar happened
'Mongst de darkeys, ef Laughin' warn't dar
Things mos'ly went on purty solemn—
For dey missed him, I 'clar'.

Ise seed folk whose laughin' was hurtin',
Seemin' like it was scornful some way;
But his'n warn't dat sort o' music—
As diff'rent as night-time f'om day.

When he opened dem jaw-bones o' his'n
An' let it all out in one ro',
Evvybody what heerd him laughed wid him
An' wanted some mo'.

Laughin' seemed ter take life sort o' cur'us,
For I never did know him ter cry ;
But sometimes Ise noticed a misty
Sort o' sorrowful look in his eye.
Ole Marster he said : "A philos'pher
Ole Laughin' is, sartin an' sho' ;
He looks on de bright side o' all things,
An' who can do mo'?"

When Marster got sick, an' deceasded,
An' de coffin sot dar on de groun
By de grave, all de plantation darkeys
Kim weepin' an' moanin' aroun' ;

An' Laughin' was dar, but de devil,
In spite o' de grief in his face,
Seemed ter have a grip on him as usual,
Eben dar at dat place—

For when, arter de words, "Dus' ter ashes!"
De Preacher stood silent in pra'r,
Ole Laughin' he 'rupted de silence
Wid his reg'lar music, I 'clar'!
But he didn' live long arter Marster,
An' he died wid a smile on his mouf:
Dey bofe on 'em sleeps in Ferginyer,
Down dar in de Souf.

## EBO.

All o' dese here doin's
  Don't suit me ;
Ise an ole-time nigger—
  Don't you see ?

Dis here eddication's
  Humbug, sho' ;
It's done played de devil
  Wid Ebo.

Somewhar 'bout lars' summer,
  Dicey she
Tuk 'n' struck a notion—
  Don't you see ?

Says she : " Ise been thinkin'."
An' I says :
" What *you* done thunk, honey ? "
Says she : " Yes,

" Ise been thinkin' mons'ous
'Bout Ebo ;
He's fo'teen year ole now—
Don't you know ? "

S'I : " Ole 'oman, you is
Right, I 'spec' ;
Dar's fo'teen—he kim fus'—
Dat's kerrec' ! "

Says she : " He's a-growin'
Up a fool ;
An' Ise gwine ter sen' him
Ter de school."

Bein's how it looked like
  She was bent
On de projick, Ebo
  Tuk 'n' went.

An' sence dat lars' summer—
  Don't you see?—
Dat 'ar boy have p'int'ly
  Outdone me!

Whe-ew! de norrations,
  Dem o' his'n!
Umph! I 'busses laughin'
  Jes' ter lissen!

What you think dat Ebo
  Come tell me?
Dat all dis here y'arth here—
  Flat, you see—

Dat it's roun', an' rolls jes'
Like a ball!
"Ebo, dat's a lie," I
Says, "dat's all!

"Don't you see yer Mammy,
Evvy night,
Set de water-piggin
Out o' sight

"Ob you chillun, up dar
On de shelf?—
Now, Mars' Spellin'-booker,
'Splain yerself—

"Sunrise, dat 'ar water's
In dar still;
Ef de y'arth turned over,
It 'ud spill!"

But he keeps resistin'
It are so—
Eddication's done gone
Sp'ilt Ebo.

He's forever tellin'
Some sich lie ;
He's gwi' fine out better
By-um-by.

Ef Ebo keeps l'arnin'
At dat school,
Nex' thing, he'll be provin'
Ise a fool !

I are p'int'ly gwine ter
Take Ebo
Way f'om dat ar school-'ouse,
Sartin sho' !

## DEPARTED LUCK.

JOHN, put one mo' stick on de harf. Jes' one?
Well, lay it on;
An' den we'll freeze afo' we starve, beca'se de
bread's all gone.
My trem'lin' lim's won't hole out long; an' what's
de use ter pray?
Lord, pity dese po' niggers who has gin dere luck
away!

You's been too sick ter do a bit o' work sence dat
'ar time
I started down ter Denny's store, an' foun' dat silber
dime

Jes' in de turnin' o' de road ; an', like a fool dat day,
Instid o' keepin' it, I tuk an' gin my luck away.

John, don't you 'member, long ago, when little Bill
was born,
We worked down at de Edgeworth place, amongst
ole Marster's corn ?
De eatin's dat we used ter have, an' not a cent ter
pay—
Dat time when we was never 'feard ter give our
luck away ?

A little while aback, when you was layin' moanin'
dar,
I kep' a-thinkin' o' dem days, an' tried ter turn ter
pra'r ;
But, somehow, evvy bit o' pra'r dis w'ared-out mouf
could say
Was, "Lord, for dat 'ar time, afo' I gin my luck
away!"

An' den it seemed like, sho' enuf, it had come back onst mo'—
Seemed like I seed Miss Ellen dar, a-standin' in de do',
Jes' like as how she used ter come each Chris'mus, wid a tray
O' Chris'mus things, long, long afo' I gin my luck away.

Seemed like I heerd de music dat de white folks always had
Up at de Gre't House, Chris'mus-time, when evvy soul was glad ;
Seemed like a gre't big fyer burned here on de harf, some way ;
I thought we never had been po', an' gin our luck away.

An' you was settin' over dar, an' Bill was on de flo',
A playin' like he used ter play in dat long time ago;
But den de cole gript on me, an' de dream it wudden stay:
We're weak an' starvin', John, beca'se I gin my luck away.

But take it easy, John! I know we never is gwi' see
Sich days as dem ag'in; 'fo' long dey'll bury you an' me.
Bread gone, de little stick burnt out; de embers gittin' gray—
Lord, fetch us whar we never mo' can give our luck away!

## KREE.

My boy Kree ?
He played wid you when you was a chile ?
You an' he
Growed up tergether ? Wait ! Lemme see !
Closer ! so I can look in yer face !—
Mars' George's smile !
Lord love you, Marster !
Dar 'neaf dat cypress is whar Kree lays.

Sunburnt an' grown !
Mars' George, I shudden ha' knowed you, son,
'Count o' de beard dat yer face has on,
But for dat ole-time smile o' your'n—

"An' Kree?" you say.
Hadn't you heerd, Marster,
He 'ceasded de year dat you went away?

Kree an' you!
How de ole times comes back onst mo'—
Moonlight fishin's, an' hyars in de sno';
Squirrels an' jaybirds up overhead,
In de oak-trees dat de sun shined through!—
Look at me, Marster!
Here is me livin'; an' Kree, he's dead.

'Pears ter me strange
Now, when I thinks on 'em, dose ole years:
Mars' George, sometimes de b'ilin' tears
Fills up my eyes,
'Count o' de mizery now, an' de change—
De sun dims, Marster,
Ter an ole man, when his one boy dies.

Did you say "How?"
Out in de dug-out, one moonshine night,
Fishin' wid your baby brother—he
Wid de curls o' yaller, like streaks o' light,
An' de dancin' big blue eyes. Dead, now—.
Kree died for him;
An' yearnin' for Kree,
De Lord tuk him, Marster:
De green grass kivers 'em bofe f'om sight.

Heerd o' de tale?
Didn' know Kree was de one dat drowned
Savin' Mars' Charley? Well, 'twere he.
De boy waxed weaker, his face mo' pale,
Arter de corpse o' poor Kree were found.
Two months later he went, you see:
God bless you, Marster!
Nine years has rolled over bofe onder ground.

Worn out an' gray,
Here I sets waitin', Mars' George, alone.
All on 'em's gone—
Marster an' Mistis, an' Charley an' he.
You an' me only is lef'. Some day,
When you's gone back ter yer ship on de sea,
I'll hear him say,
Jes' as he used ter, a-fishin', ter me:
"Daddy, come over!" An' passin' away,
Dat side de river, again I'll be
Wid my boy Kree.

## "MINE OYSTER."

No, it never did agree wid de likes o' dis here nigger,
For de a'r is sort o' stiflin' twix' dese mountains, Eas' an' Wes';
Evvy blessed year I lives here, seems dese hills is growin' bigger
Ter de miz'ry in my knee-j'ints an' de trouble in my ches'.

Ise a Tuckahoe Ferginyan f'om Tide-water of Ferginyer,
Whar de oshters am delishus an' de fish is hard ter beat;

Lord, I hasn' seed an oshter, in de time dat I has
been here,
Dat dis nigger have cornsidered fittin' any ways
ter eat.

Dey fetches 'em in cans up, dese here railroad sojer-
fellows,
An' it takes a good day's workin' ter perkure an
oshter-stew.
Dese ain't nothin' but runt-oshters; yet de reste-
ranters tell us
Dat dey come f'om Mobjack Bay, sir. Pshaw!
I know dat *can't* be true!

I lived down dar myself onst, an' I think I l'arnt de
fashion
O' dem oshters in dat water—shape, an' size, an'
ta'se, an' all;

Dis here darkey may be ign'ant, an' widout no ed-
dication,
But a Mobjack oshter p'int'ly *is* beknownst ter
Uncle Saul.

You may brag o' roasted possum an' de glories o'
hog-killin',
You can 'numerate de hom'ny, you can shout de
ole ash-cake ;
But one dish o' Mobjack oshters, an' ole Saul is
p'int'ly willin'
Ter denounce de other eatin's for de Mobjack
oshters' sake !

Umph ! dis mouf o' mine jes' waters at de thought
o' dem dar critters—
Fried, an' baked, an' stewed, an' raw ones—how
we 'stroyed 'em down dar ;

Soft as mush, an' f'arly better dan merlasses on yer
fritters—
But de glory am departed, an' dem oshters ain't
nowhar!

I have trabbled through Ferginyer sence Mars'
Linkum sont de freedom;
I have cotch 'em, an' I've eat 'em, Norf an' Souf
an' Eas' an' Wes'.
Oh, dey's prime at Glorster P'int; dar it's mighty
hard ter beat 'em;
But de oshters fo'm ole Mobjack am de sugares'
an' bes'.

It is seben year, an' ober, sence I 'zided in dat sec-
tion,
An' I'm 'feared dis hilly Valley 'ull lay on me when
I die;

But I holds de ole Tide-water in my warmes' ree-
collection,
An' I'd like ter slip down dar onst mo' an' make
dem oshters fly.

I would like ter eat dem oshters 'twel I perish jes'
f'om eatin';
Dat's de kind o' death dat seems like it 'ud suit
yer Uncle Saul.
Yes, I'd ruther go dat way, sir, dan ter drap down
dead in meetin';
Fur ter die f'om eatin' oshters is de sweetes'
death o' all.

## POKE O' MOONSHINE.

MOONSHINE? Yes, sir,
Right smart ahead;
Ten mile, at bes', sir.
Git down an' res', sir,
Outen de rain.
Onder dat shed
Is a good place ter tie him,
Or Joe can stan' by him
'Twel you's ready ter set out again.

"Know Poke o' Moonshine?"
Yes, sir, I does.
Marster, you won't fine
Many o' *his* kine

'Roun' dis here way!—
Much as he was
Sence I remember;
Ole John's December
Is haler dan mos' folkses' May.

Moonshine? Played out!
When dey was rich,
'Twas widout doubt
De fines' about—
Pictur's an' things,
Flowers an' sich—
All sorts o' doin's:
Now it's in ruins—
But dat's what war gen'ully brings.

Moonshine 'bout den
'Longed ter Mars' Sidney.
All o' de men
O' dat family's been

Purty good grit—
Folks o' fine kidney ;
So, when de war kim,
Nothin' could hender him
But what he mus' go inter it.

John Poke, o' co'se,
Went in dar, too ;
Mis' Agnes stays
Home, jes' beca'se
Wimen can't b'ar
What men goes through—
Lovely an' young she were,
When Mars' Sid went f'om her
Ter be shot in dat turrible war.

Home kim John Poke
Wid de lad dead :
" In all de smoke
An' de fightin' he spoke

Ter me only," says he,
"An' here's what he said:
'John, take good keer o' her—
Guard de welfare o' her—
Ef death comes betwix' her an' me.'"

All dese here years
John Poke have been
True ter dem tears.
Moonshine affairs
Mars' Sid' lef' bad;
John's been a frien'—
So he has keered fur her,
What he's had, spared fur her,
All fur de sake o' dat lad.

Dat's a fine hoss!
Lead him out, Joe!
Rain's over, boss;
Not much time los'

Stoppin' wid me—
Gently, dar! whoa!
Marster, in passin' by
On yer way back, sir, I
Hope you'll tell me how John Poke may be.

Switch, sir? I says
You'll hardly fine
Sich, nowadays;
'Speshly dey's skase
'Roun' dis here way,
Men o' *his* kine.
I'm de man orter know
Better dan mos' folks, sho'.
My daddy, sir? Yes, sir. Good-day!

## THE LAMENT OF ORPHEUS.

"BEEN travellin'?" Don't you see I is?
"Whar ter," hey? Ole Green Su'phur:
I tried it for my rheumatiz,
An' never knowed it rougher.
I used ter go dar long ago,
When I was young an' healthy:
It ain't like what it was, you know,
When Souvern folks was wealthy.

Well, yes; I s'pose as many now
Goes dar, as used ter go dar:
But seems like it have changed somehow—
Sersi'ty's gittin' low dar.

Ise knowed de time de F. F. V.'s
An' none else run it, honey:
But things is changed; an' so, you sees,
All goes dat's got de money.

When Marster sot out evvy June,
Sometime about de middle,
I always went; an' many a chune
Ise played dar on dis fiddle:
But fiddlin' now is done gone out,
An' brass ban's is de fashion,
An' Garmins; not a night widout
De Garmin like de nation!

You never seen de Garmin, hey?
You orter seen it, honey;
Jes' take an' go down dar, some day;
It's p'int'ly wuth de money.

You never seed a monkey-show
Could ever stan' a-showin'
Ter one o' dem things all ago,
Wid all de ban' a-blowin'.

You knows de ole Ferginyer Reel,
Whar two goes down de middle?
I never think o't 'daut I feel
A hankerin' fur dis fiddle.
Dat was a dance an F. F. V.
Mought well be proud ter dance in;
But dis here Garmin—I can't see
How white folks stan's sich prancin'!

"How does dey dance de Garmin?" Well,
De ban' it 'gins ter sizzle;
An' den, befo' you's time ter tell,
A fellow blows a whistle;

An' den de ladies an' de men
  Dey takes an' grabs each other,
An' spins an' whirls an' spins agen—
  An' never lets go, nuther!

I know de white folks knows a heap,
  An' Ise jes' an ole nigger
Wid brains 'bout big enough ter keep
  F'om gittin' hurt—no bigger;
But, somehow, it do look ter me
  Like things had got alarmin',
Ter see an ole-time F. F. V.
  A-dancin' dis new Garmin.

Well, sence my trip down dar I feel
  Like hangin' up de fiddle.
Dey's done forsook de fine ole reel,
  Whar two goes down de middle;

An' ole-time folks an' ole-time chunes
Is woted mighty slow dar—
For monkey ban's an' whistlin' loons
Has run sersi'ty low dar!

## LOFTY AND LOWLY.

De white man's got de 'vantage
  O' de cullud pusson, sartin:
You's done been free
Longer dan me—
  An' dat's one thing in startin'.

You never worked terbarker,
  But tuk it out at college;
I never looks
Inter de books—
  You has me on sich knowledge.

I ain't got no high notions,
  Let 'lone de eddication;

Nor money 'twel
You can't stan' still—
As much as all creation!

My wife don't play de panny,
Nor drive brash hosses, nuther;
Nor w'ar fine clo'es,
Like she o' your's—
Mine's some below dat, ruther!

But lissen at me, Marster:
I knows all dese things fits you;
O' co'se, you ought
Ter have dis sort—
But dar's one place I gits you:

I don't have harf de worry
What troubles your life, honey;

De bank, you see,
Mought bus' for me—
  *I* wudden lose no money!

Ef all your books an' pictur's
  Was somehow ter git 'stroyed,
Marster, I know
Dat, sartin sho',
  You'd mourn for what you's 'joyed.

You never is contented:
  You wants yer big pile bigger;
Ain't I kerrec',
Den, when I 'spec'
  You's outdone by a nigger?

## "GOD KNOWS."

Tell you a tale, eh? Bless de chillun!
It's been sich a very long time ago
Dat I don't know whether I ain't forgotten
All o' dem tales dat I used ter know.
Your daddy was always axin' fur 'em,
When he was a chap, jes' like you two.
Ise tole him lots; but I disremember—
It's been so long—all de bes' I knew.

'Twas a wile March mont', an' de win' was blowin'—
Blowin' great guns, de sailors say;
De water was foamin', an' all de riggin'
Wropt ter de mas's, in de Chessypeake Bay.

A wreck tuk place not fur f'om Norfolk—
A sloop f'om Boston, an' all han's drowned;
Four men an' a chile an' a yaller-hyared 'oman,
Dese was de corpses de sho'-folk found.

'Twas close ter de lan' whar de vessel stranded,
But de waves was runnin' so orful high
It was boun' ter come—dar was no help fur it—
All o' dem people was marked ter die.
One o' de papers drifted inwards,
What 'longed ter de sloop; an' dar on it
De name o' de men an' de long-hyared 'oman
Dat kim f'om Boston was plainly writ.

Three o' de men was de Cap'en's sailors,
De Cap'en's self was de tother one;
An' we jedged his wife was de white-faced 'oman,
But de name o' de little chile was gone.

De Kurriner—him what sets on bodies—
He copied inter his book all dose ;
Den he axed me : "How shell I write dis baby ?"
An' I answered de Kurriner : "Sir, God knows!

So when dey kim fur ter bury de bodies
O' de Boston men by de Chessypeake Bay,
Dey put up a head-mark over each on 'em,
Wid his name an' his death an' his drownin'-day.
An' de yaller-hyared 'oman was buried wid 'em,
An' her name an' her death an' her day was writ
On de head-board plain ; but dat one over
De chile—dar was nothin' ter put on it.

But one what sot on de Kurriner's jury—
A gray-head man wid a kinely eye—
Sez : "Let it alone, an' I'll ten' ter it,
An' write a name on it by an' by."

Dar's a marble sharf' not fur f'om Norfolk,
By de Bay down dar ; an' whoever goes
Up de Shipwreck Road kin read de writin'
Dat's writ up over dat chile : "God knows!"

## VIRGINIA CREEPERS.

(1868.)

Ole Mistis offen afo' she died—
You know how she used ter set
Out dar on de Gre't House porch, o' days;
I thinks I sees her yet—
Offen she said: "*You's* good enough—
But Anniky's pizen mean;
An' dem chillun o' her'n an' yourn's de scruff
O' de y'arth!" Now, y'all done seen
How what she tole me is done come true:
I always knowed it, and said so, too.

What is dat sass you's up ter, now?
What does you want ter know?

Ef you says one word 'gin ole Mistis, boy,
I'll smack you, sartin sho'!
"How come she go call you scruff?" Jes dis:
Y'all was de lazies' crew
Dat de Lord ever made, in doin' de work
Dat she wanted you ter do;
"Ferginyer Creepers!" she used ter say,
When she seen you a-pokin' along all day.

An' now sence de freedom come, it's wus'
Dan ever it was afo';
You stretches out dar in de sun, an' sleeps
An' sleeps foreber mo'.
Ef you's got a rag ter yer back, somehow
You thinks dat dat's enough.
An', boy, dat's de reason o' how come why
Ole Mistis called you scruff.
You lets me slave fur de grub you eat;
You sleeps, while I gethers de bread an' meat.

I'm gittin' w'ared out wid dis here thing
O' t'ilin' fur all o' you ;
Sometimes I wishes de ole slave ways
Was back fur a week or two.
"How come ?" Jes dis : ter make you work !
De niggers never did lay
Out on a bench in de sunshine den,
An' sun deyselves all day.
"Ferginyer Creepers" was bad, at fus' ;
"Ferginyer Sleepers" is p'int'ly wus' !

## BEFORE THE PARTY.

Yes, honey, you p'int'ly is purty;
How long 'fo' de ball gwi' begin?
"Some time yet?" An' when you's all dancin',
Can't yer ole Mammy come an' peep in?

Dat white silk, it sho'ly do suit you—
An' dem vi'lets wropt inter yer hyar;
Mars' Ranny loves dem sort o' blossoms—
I 'spec', Baby, dat's why dey's dar.

Lord, chile! you looks jes' like yer mother,
When you turn yer head sideways, dat way;
Has you been showed yerself ter Ole Marster?
You has, hey? An' what did he say?

"He never said nothin'—jes' only
His mouf twitch like ketchin' a cry;
An' he kissed you, an' turn off an' lef' you,
Wid de water done come ter his eye?"

Yes, honey, you's like her; dat's gospel;
An' I knows, by de way dat he done,
Dat you fotch her up ter him adzactly,
An' de ole times dat's over an' gone.

She used ter w'ar vi'lets dat summer—
He loved 'em, like Mars' Ranny do—
Her fus' season at de White Suff'rer,
When she was a young gal like you.

I went wid her dar, dat 'ar season—
Dey called her de Belle o' de Springs;
De young bucks run crazy about her—
You never did see sich fool things!

But Marster was dar, de bes'-lookin'
An' de smartes', I hearn 'em all say ;
An' he owned a Jeems River plantation,
An' so he jes' kerried de day.

She w'ared a white dress de fus' ebenin'
She danced at de ball ; an' she hel'
Some vi'lets like dem in her fingers—
I 'members it all very well.

I hasn't no doubt dat Ole Marster,
When he seed you, he thought o' dat night ;
An', mebbe, some other times, honey,
When he 'membered her 'rayed out in white.

Now I thinks, she was drest de same fashion
At de weddin' at Springfield, you know ;
Some vi'lets de onlies' color,
An' her white silk mo' shiny dan snow ;

An', Baby, her fingers wropt over
Fresh blossoms, fotch f'om de ole place,
Like dem ; an' white garmen's was on her,
De las' time I looked at her face.

---

It do make me feel sorter ole-like,
Fur ter see you growed hansum an tall ;
I hardly cornsidered it, honey,
'Twel you fixed up ter 'ten' yer fus' ball—

'Ca'se you's never seemed nothin' but Baby,
An' it looks sich a short time ago :
Yes, Mistis, I'm gwi' come an' see you,
When you dances wid Mars' Ranny, sho'.

## AT WHITEHALL.

(*Precinct No.* 32, *Albemarle County ; November*, 1878.)

"Ole ?" How ole does you have ter be ?
Warn't dat Reuben I jes' now see
Walk up an' put his paper in ?
Don't you 'spec' Ise as ole as he ?
Marster, you mus' be makin' fun !
Ain't got ter be but twenty-one ?
I'm pas' two-hund'ed, as sho' as sin !
Look at dat Reuben over dar !
Ain't no gray in *his* kinky hyar ;
Now adzamine dis wool o' mine.
My back's bent wid de rheumatiz ;
Nothin' de martter at all wid his.

Marster, sho' as de sun do shine,
Ole Jim's over two-hund'ed, sir.
"Prove it?" Well, sir, you keep de sco'—
Keep it fyar, an' I'll prove it, sho'!
Ole Jim's over two-hund'ed year—
My ole Marster, I buried him—
Sixty-nine years dat counts fur Jim;
Mistis was forty; young Mars' Joe
He was nigh about thirty-fo'—
I tuk 'n' buried bofe o' dem dar.
How many's dat, sir? Well, keep 'count—
I'm gwine ter give you de 'zact amount.
My ole 'oman was sixty-three—
Gittin' on to'ds it, don't you see?
Over two-hund'ed, fyar an' squar'—
Two o' de chillun Ise put away—
Over two-hund'ed now, you say?
Jes' you adzamine dat ar sco',
Down on yer paper dar, onst mo'—

Over two-hund'ed, sho' as sin !
Here is de vote, sir ! Put it in.
Twenty-one years ! Umph ! what's dat ?
Hope I may never eat possum-fat,
Never tetch ash-cake-pone no mo',
Ef I ain't over two-hund'ed, sho' !

## MARS' RODNEY'S HAT.

(1867.)

Ter be sho', dar's some holes in it—
What o' dat?
Yes, it's greasy; an' de ban's gone
F'om de hat.
Sun done tuk out all de color;
An' de rain's
Done gone kivered it wid rusty
Sort o' stains:
But it suits me, an' I likes it.
Cæsar, dar,
He's done mounted a new beaver
'Top his hyar.

Boy, I wudden trade my kiver,
Nary pull,
Not for twenty like dat 'ar one
On your wool.
Dar's a story 'tached ter dis 'un,
Mistis said,
'Ca'se it onst 'longed ter a soljer
Dat is dead.
"Who?" Mars' Rodney, in de war-time,
Went ter fight
Wid dis hat on; plumes swung f'om it
Black as night.
He were shot down dar by Richmun'
In dis hat:
See dis split here by de rim? It
Kim f'om dat!

---

Long years back, onst I was comin'
Down dat lane—

Heish yer cussed jabberin', nigger!—
I was say'n'——?
Yes, a-trabellin' f'om de Quarters;
An' he stood
By de big oak at de cornder
O' de wood.
Don't you 'member dat young lady
Used ter come,
Reg'lar ev'ry summer, up here
F'om her home,
Visitin' o' young Miss Nellie?
Well, dat day
*She* were wid him. As I pas', I
Hear him say:
"Yes, I love you!" but I missed jes'
What she said;
An' when I looked back, dis hat were
On her head!
Seems ter me you don't see ladies

Like her now ;
An' de men ain't fine as he was,
I'll allow.
'Twas de purtiest pictur' ever
Struck my sight :
His face drapped ter her'n, turned up'ards,
Tetched wid light.

---

Young Mars' Rodney, two days arter,
Went away.
He were young, de war mos' over ;
So, dat day,
He 'peared keerless-like, an' happy
Fur ter go—
But he never kim back livin'
Any mo'.
She went, too, an' never is been
Here sence den.

I had tuk a notion she had
Met her en',
'Twel ole Mis' sez : "She is livin'
Sum'ers yet ;
But I'm 'fear'd," sez she, "her brightes'
Sun have set."
So I jedge she ain't so happy,
Jes' by dat,
As dat mornin' when he kissed her
'Neaf dis hat.

## ANANIAS.

He's a two-forty team, sir, on tellin' a lie,
An' I'm sartin de devil 'ull get him bimeby;
I'll jes' mention you why:

He's done been out here on dis Chessypeake Road,
At work like a mule fur his clo'es an' his board—
As dey tole me, dat knowed;

He stayed dar, I 'spec's, about half o' a year,
An' de fus' thing I know he's a-comin' back here—
Purty 'zumptious, yes, sir!

"How come so?" Jes' beca'se dat de nigger perten's
Dat he's trabelled de worl', an' done been ter its en's;
But I *has* got some sense,

An' I ain't gwine ter swallow dat tarbaby's lies:
He needn' be flingin' his dus' in my eyes—
I kin see when I tries!

Ef you jes' hear his racket, f'om what he have tole,
He's done made some twenty-odd sacksful o' gole,
An' had it all stole!

An' he talks 'bout Kenturky, an' what he have seen;
How de hosses is one-twenty whar he has been,
An de bluegrass all green.

Circus-ridin', he says, is one thing he's been at ;
An' his circus has Junybugs big as my hat.
An' what gits over dat

Is his ellyphant yarns, sir ; an' den, ter be sho',
He's been huntin' o' krokydiles dar, sir, you know,
An' killed b'ars by de sco'.

I 'spec' ef his Marster could come back an' see
How dis boy have turned out, he would p'int'ly agree
Wid his mammy an' me,

Dat de name he hitched ter him is sartin come true.
" What's dat ? " Ananias : an' 'twix' me an' you,
He kin outlie dat Jew !

Ise knowed dat 'ar boy sence he warn't but so high,
An' he's never tole nothin' yet 'cep' 'twas a lie !
He's gwi' ketch it bimeby !

Sence de day I was born, I could never stan' liars:
De wus' thing my wife an' me has for ter try us,
Is dis here Ananias.

## DEAD.

Ole Marster's dead ter-night—
Tuk sudden, when he looked as peart an' strong,
An' brash an' hearty-like, as all along
He's been dese fifteen year: "Done dead!"
Young Doctor Gahnett said
Ter me, yistiddy, break o' light.
Hard fur ter know we never is gwi' see
Ole Marster 'roun' here like he used ter be—
Beca'se he's dead ter-night.

De bes' man ever lived, he were—
I never is been hear
Nothin' but good o' him;

An' now ter think dem bright blue eyes is dim!
Done gone ter bed,
Ter sleep fur good—dirt pillows 'neaf his head—
Beca'se he's dead.

We buried our dead Marster dar
Ter-day,
In de ole church-yard whar
We used ter play
When we was bar'foot boys, some sixty year ago;
An' all his cullud folks, dat loved him so—
Beca'se he was as near
An' dear
Ter us as ter his own—
Dey tuk 'n' come
Ter lay ole Marster in his norrer home;
An' each one flung
A shovelful in on him. Den a groan

Went up, so loud de preacher cudden pray.

But den,

Standin' aroun' de half-full grave, we sung

Dat hymn Ise often heerd roll off his tongue :

"I wudden live alway!"

Dat was de en'—

Amen!

As I sets here,

A-watchin' o' dem stars up dar on high

In dat blue sky,

It do appear,

Someway,

Dat he is furder off f'om me dan dey ;

It do appear

Like it was hard ter know he's tuk 'n' gone,

Like it was hard, somehow, ter jes' live on—

We folks dat's worf

So little—while de dug-up earf
Has kivered him f'om sight :
My Marster, my ole Marster, dead ter-night!

He never done no harm ter any livin' thing
De good Lord made ;
He fed de po'—I know de news 'll bring
Miz'ry ter many a one dat's prayed
Often an' over dat his years mought be
Like de numerous leaves on a tree.
But it's bes'—
De Lord, He knows what's right ;
"On Jesus' breas'
He gives ter his beloved sleep,"
De good Book say :
An' so, someway,
I 'spec' ole Marster's happy dar ter-night.

## FESTINA LENTE.

I WUSH you hadn' gone an' did
  Jes' what I tole ye not ter!
De Chris'mus dinner's tuk 'n' slid
  Long o' yo' foolin', drot yer!
I axed you, fus', ter be mo' slow;
  But you mus' go a-skeetin',
An' let de hyar out in de snow—
  Our onlies' Chris'mus eatin'.

You needn' stan' up dar an' grin,
  Jes' like 'twar sumpin' funny!
Ef dat 'ar hyar ain't tuk *you* in,
  *I* are mistaken, honey.

Ise 'vised you, time an' time ag'in,
'Bout rushin' 'roun' an' t'arin';
De way you does, Joe, are a sin
Ter set a preacher sw'arin'!

Dar ain't no sense in starin' 'roun'
Ter see ef he's in sight, sir;
He's five mile off, I'll jes' be boun',
An' sarves you 'zactly right, sir!
Not for ter know no mo' dan dat
'Bout handlin' o' gum triggers,
An' let him go, slick as my hat—
It's jes' like you young niggers.

Now, lemme tell you onst ag'in:
Don't do things in a skurry;
Ixcess o' zeal are boun' ter win,
But not ixcess o' hurry.

So, Joe, ef ever you let's go
  Another Chris'mus dinner,
I'll lay a hick'ry on you, Joe,
  As sho' as I'm a sinner!

## JUCKS.

YONDER he comes, jes' as peart: Dat's de way
He will be singin' an' whistlin' all day.

Seems like he don't mind dem crutches no mo'
Dan nothin'; an' as for dat eye, ter be sho',

He says he *would* ruther have two eyes dan one,
But it's done been knocked out—an' what's done
gone, is gone.

"How do he manage ter live?" Well, you see,
He han'les de fiddle jes' like A B C.

An' dance! Lord, you jes' orter see what a huf
Dat 'ar lame nigger slings, when he tries sho' enuf!

'Cause, bein' as how he are crippled an' lame,
White folks dey doesn' treat Jucks jes' de same

As dem what has got all dey lim's safe an' soun'—
Dem niggers what's able ter ten' ter de groun' ;

Dey sorter feels sorry ter see him dat way,
An' dey's always a-givin' him quarters ter play.—

He got busted up so a-nussin' a mill
Dat Mars' Thomas run, over dar on de hill.

You knows Mars' Tom's two little gals ? Well, one day—
Dem chillun forever *would* git in Jucks' way—

Well, dey was a-foolin' aroun' wid de 'sheen—
'Twas one o' dese here big steam saw-mills you's seen—

An' dey got ter come pullin' an' yerkin' de screws
An' de thingumajigs dat a steam saw-mill use.

Jucks, he cudden watch 'em an' do his work, too,
So arter a while dey jes' pulled de wrong screw ;

As soon as he seed 'em, Jucks tuk out an' run—
But he knowed 'twas too late for ter men' what dey'd done,

So he grabbed 'em an' chunked 'em out in de saw-dus',
Way off ter one side : an' de 'sheen tuk 'n' bus' !

Dat's how come he walks wid dem crutches, an' why
He can't see on one side, for lack o' an eye.

"He's a mighty fine fiddler," Mars' Thomas he say ;
"An' he never shall want while I'm livin', no way!"

## ASHCAKE.

WELL, yes, sir, dat am a comical name—
It are so, for a fac'—
But I knowed one, down in Ferginyer,
Could 'a' toted dat on its back.

"What was it?" I'm gwine to tell you—
'Twas mons'us long ago:
'Twas "Ashcake," sah; an' all on us
Use' ter call 'im jes' "Ashcake," so.

You see, sir, my ole Marster, he
Was a pow'ful wealfy man,
Wid mo' plantations dan hyahs on you haid—
Gre't acres o' low-groun' lan',

Jeems River bottoms, dat used ter stall
A fo'-hoss plough, no time ;
An' he'd knock you down ef you jes' had dyared
Ter study 'bout guano 'n' lime.

De corn used ter stan' in de row dat thick
You jes' could follow de balk ;
An' rank ! well, I 'clar' ter de king, Ise seed
Five 'coons up a single stalk !

He owned mo' niggers 'n arr' a man
About dyar, black an' bright;
He owned so many, b'fo' de Lord,
He didn' know all by sight !

Well, sir, one evelin', long to'ds dusk,
I seen de Marster stan'
An' watch a yaller boy pass de gate
Wid a ashcake in his han'.

He never had no mammy at all—
  Leastways, she was dead by dat—
An' de cook an' de hands about on de place
  Used ter see dat de boy kep' fat.

Well, he trotted along down de parf dat night,
  An' de Marster he seen him go,
An' hollered, "Say, boy—say, what's yer name?"
  "A—ashcake, sir," says Joe.

It 'peared ter tickle de Marster much,
  An' he called him up to de do'.
"Well, dat is a curisome name," says he;
  "But I guess it suits you, sho'."

"Whose son are you?" de Marster axed.
  "Young Jane's," says Joe; "she's daid."
A sperrit cudden 'a' growed mo' pale,
  An' "By Gord!" I heerd him said.

He tuk de child 'long in de house,
Jes' 'count o' dat ar whim ;
An', dat-time-out, you never see
Sich sto' as he sot by him.

An' Ashcake swung his cradle, too,
As clean as ever you see ;
An' stuck as close ter ole Marster's heel
As de shader sticks to de tree.

'Twel one dark night, when de river was out,
De Marster an' Ashcake Joe
Was comin' home an' de skiff upsot,
An' Marster 'd 'a' drownded, sho',

Excusin' dat Ashcake cotch'd him hard
An' gin him holt o' de boat,
An' saved him so ; but 'twas mo'n a week
B'fo' *his* body comed afloat.

An' de Marster he grieved so 'bouten dat thing,
It warn' long, sah, befo' he died ;
An' he's sleep, way down in Ferginyer,
Not fur from young Ashcake's side.

## ICHABOD.

All o' de glory's done departed—
Tuk 'n' gone !
It p'intedly makes me right down-hearted,
Sho's you're born.

All on it comes o' dis books an' schoolin'
De chilluns git ;
I never ain't credit no sich foolin,'
An' doesn't, yit.

What say ? "De 'fects o' de eddication ?"
I doesn' know
Nothin' 'bout 'fects ; but dis nigger nation
Is sp'ilin', sho'.

I doesn' anchor my ship ter l'arnin'
What makes chaps say
Things dat 'ud never be thunk by niggers
Dat's done got gray.

Dey doesn' believe one blessed cushtion
Outside de books ;
Jes' call up one an' 'scuss a subjec',
An' mark his looks.

Ax ef he thinks dat de salt upsotted
Is sign o' grief ?
Not one o' dese eddicated young uns
Has sich belief.

Ax ef he thinks dose dat inherit
Up above
Kin ever come back, ef dey wish, in sperit
Ter dem dey love ?

Ax ef he thinks dat a rusty horseshoe
Over de do'
'Ull keep de witch f'om ridin' you nightmar'?
An' he'll say, "No!"

Jes' 'quire, will you, ef de books tells him
'Bout de harnt-lights
In de grave-yard, down by de bank o' de river,
We sees at nights?

An' see ef de little nigger doesn'
Up an' say,
"De ph'los'phy 'splains dey's jack-my-lanterns,
Cl'ar as day!"

Dunno nothin' 'bout 'fects; but sartin,
Sho's you're born,
Dar's too much books, an' too little grubbin'
'Mongst de corn.

Yes, sir ! de glory's done uptwisted
Flat o's back !
De new words don't suit de ole-time music,
Dat's a fac' !

## SIMEON, F'OM GEORGY.

We had hauled in de corn f'om de corn-fiel'
Two weeks 'fo' you kim along here,
An' shocked it up dar in de barn-yard—
We shocks it up dar, ev'vy year:
An' lars' night,
We shucked it all out, purty near.

I knowed how as you was a stranger,
An' thought, perhaps, whar you was born,
'Mongst de cotton an' cane down in Georgy,
Dat you'd never seed niggers shuck corn
So I 'spicioned,
O' case, dat you'd want ter ha' gone.

An' I looked fur you all 'roun' de place here,
Ter try fur ter git you ter ten';
But you wasn' nowhar', an' I'm sorry
Dat you missed de corn-shuckin', my frien':
It was gran';
Dar was music an' whiskey 'dout en'.

Marster sets out de liquor-pervisions,
Ev'vy corn-shuckin' time, in de fall—
Only jes' 'bout enough ter be jolly
An' not ter make fools on us all:
An' ole Lem
An' his fiddle, dey opens de ball.

Lars' night, Lem was dar wid de fiddle,
An' de fiddle it got up an' sung.
I never knowed Lem'el so lively,
Nor seed sich a bow as he swung,
Sence de days
When me an' ole Lem'el was young.

An' de niggers pitched inter de corn-pile
An', I tell you, de shucks fa'rly flew ;
De pile o' shucked corn it growed bigger,
An' was lovely an' yaller an' new :
An sho'ly,
I sartinly wished, Sim, for you.

For de jug it kep' comin' down my way—
Lem'el's Bill was a-passin' it 'roun'—
An' de niggers was singin' like forty,
Seemin' like dey was tryin' ter drown
Lem's fiddle ;
But Lem'el, he stuck ter his groun'.

'Twel presen'ly, here comes a nigger—
De blackes' dat ever I see—
An' say a few words fus' ter Marster,
Den steps up an' sets side o' me :
Well, I never
Seed a tarbaby shuck corn like he!

He didn' talk none whilst he sot dar,
But he leant hisself over dat corn
An' he handled it right smartly pearter
Dan Ise seed it did sence I was born:
'Twasn' long
'Fo' de mos' o' dat corn-pile was gone.

An' Marster he kim wid de whiskey,
An' hisself po'ed it out dar for him,
An' 'couraged him smartly; an' Lem'el
Stopped fiddlin' a minnit, an' kim—
What's de martter?
Den 'twas *you* at de corn-shuckin', Sim?

## DISAPPOINTMENT.

Hole de light yar! De dogs done treed!
I knowed dey'd almos' co't him,
De way dey barked. What's dat you seed?
Out on which lim'?
Yes, sir; dat's him—
We sartin sho' is got him!

Shet up dat howlin'? Kick him, Joe!
Dese dogs is p'int'ly eager;
Wait 'twel he gits down here below,
Onter de groun',
Den, I'll be boun',
He'll whup 'em like a nigger!

Joseph, my son, gimme de light,
An' you kin do de cuttin';
*I* wudden git dat 'coon ter-night.
Take holt de axe;
Six or eight cracks
'Ull fix de critter's mutton!

Jes' look-a-dar! I nuver see
'Coon's eyes so much like fire.
De way he's starin' down at me—
Hole on dar, Joe,
He's 'bout ter go!
No—he jes' crep' up higher.

Here, Cæsar—Nero—sick him! sick!
Stan' back! de tree's a-fallin'!
Now let de dogs git in dar, quick!
Ugh! Shoo dar! Scat!
Ole Toby's cat!
Jes' lissen at dat squallin'!

I never see de beat o' dat
In all my time o' seein'!
Folks what can't 'stinguish 'coon f'om cat
Better be sleep
In bed, a heap,
Dan up o' nights 'coon-treein'.

## "TO YOU."

Dar! thankee, Marster. Dat's enough.
  Don't git de ole man tight!
Lord! see de sunshine comin' through!
  *Ain't* it a purty sight?
Dis here is what de Cohees calls
  De ray-el Mount'in Jew—
It looks almos' as ole as me:
  My Marster, here's ter you!

Ah-h! dat 'ar licker fetches back
  De mem'bry o' de days
When peach an' honey was de drink
  About yer father's place.

De sideboard shined jes' like de moon,
De punch-bowl like de sun :
An' Marster an' de gentle-mens
Dey stepped up, one by one.

"Here's Apple Jack," ole Marster says,
"Some sebenteen year ole ;
An' dat peach-brandy are, I think,
About as good as gole ;
In dat recanter over dar
Is native Mount'in Jew."
Den turns his back ; an' all fills up ;
Den : "My regards ter you ! "

De guggle at dat 'canter-mouf—
Lord, sakes ! Seems like I hears
De glasses ring, de spoons ker-ling,
Dis side o' all dese years !

Ah ! 'fo'-de-war is gone away,
Jes' like yistiddy's sun :
An' Marster an' dem gentle-mens
Has stepped off, one by one.

No, not no more, I thankee, sir !
Dat fur, I'm F. F. V.—
Jes' *one* drink at a time, dem days,
Was 'nuf for quality.
Dey say dat age is mons'ous fine
Upon de Mount'in Jew ;
'Twill keep an hour or so, I 'specs' :
Wid my regards ter you.

## SWEET HOME.

Many long years I has spent here ;
Now, dey says, I mus' be leavin'.
Well, I can't he'p grievin',
Jes' beca'se
Love an' sorrow dey bofe bine me
Ter dis spot I leaves behine me,
An' de happy days dat went here
At dis ole home place.

In my age I is departin',
When my han' have los' its cunnin',
Wid de ebenin' sun in
My dim face.

Over dar, beyant dem beeches,
Whar de long-slant shadder reaches,
Is de spot I leaves my heart in
At de ole home place.

My Marster an' my Mistis,
My chillun an' my wife, sir—
Lights o' my pas' life, sir—
Dey all lays
Dar beneaf dat groun' ; me only
Lef' behine, po', ole, an' lonely.
*I* mus' leave now, while de rest is
At dere ole home place.

Oh, it hurts me, dis forsakin'
O' de place whar I was born in,
Whar fus' de light o' mornin'
Tetched my face.

I had hoped an' prayed 'dout ceasin'
Dat I'd fine my en' in peace in
Dis here house. My heart is breakin'
Fur de ole home place.

Lord o' Mussy, in Dy pity,
When Death's shadders dey come o' me,
An' de valley lays afo' me
In a maze,
Let it be dat I shell straightway
Enter through de pearly gateway
O' de sain's' eternal city
F'om dis ole home place.

## LITTLE JACK.

YES, sah. 'Twas jes' 'bout sundown
Dad went—two months ago ;
I always used ter run down
Dat time, bec'us', you know,
I wudden like ter had him die,
An' no one nigh.

You see, we cudden git him
Ter come 'way off dat lan'—
Said New House didn' fit him,
No mo' dan new shoes ; an'
Gord mout miss him at Jedgmen' day,
Ef he moved 'way.

"How ole?" Ef we all wondered
How ole he was, he'd frown
An' say he was "a hunderd—
Ole Miss done sot it down,
An' she could tell—'twas fo' or five—
Ef she was live."

Well, when, as I was sayin',
Dat night I come on down,
I see he bench was layin'
Flat-sided on de groun';
An' I kinder hurried to'ds de do'—
Quick-like, you know.

Inside I seen him layin'
Back, quiet, on de bed;
An' I mecked out he was sayin':
"Dat's what ole Marster said;
An' Marster, cert'n'y, he warn't wrong:
We'll meet 'fo' long."

I axed how he was gettin'.
"Nigh ter de furrow's een',"
He said; "dis ebenin', settin'
Outside de do', I seen
De thirteen curlews come in line,
An' knowed de sign.

"You know, ole Marster tole me
He'd come for me 'fo' long;
'Fo' you was born, he sole me—
But den he pined so strong
He come right arter Little Jack,
An' buyed him back.

"I went back ter de kerrige
An' tuk dem reins ag'in.
I druv him ter his marriage;
An', chile, it was a sin
Ter see de high an' mighty way
I looked dat day.

" Dat coat had nary button
'Ceptin' it was ob gole ;
My hat—but dat warn't nuttin' !
'Twas noble ter behole
De way dem hosses pawed de yar,
Wid me up dyar.

" But all's w'ared out befo' me !—
Marster, an' coat, an' all ;
Me only lef'—you know me !—
Cheat wheat's de lars' ter fall :
De rank grain ben's wid its own weight,
De light stan's straight.

" But heah ! Ole Marster's waitin'—
So I mus' tell you : raise
De jice dyar ; 'neaf de platin',
De sweat o' many days
Is in dat stockin'—toil an' pain
In sun an' rain.

"I worked ter save dem figgers
Ter buy *you*; but de Lord
He sot free all de niggers,
Same as white-folks, 'fo' Gord!
Free as de crows! Free as de stars!
Free as ole hyars!

"Now, chile, you teck dat money,
Git on young Marster's track,
An' pay it ter him, honey;
An' tell him Little Jack
Worked forty year, dis Chris'mus come,
Ter save dat sum;

"An' dat 'twas for ole Marster,
Ter buy your time f'om him;
But dat de war come farster,
An' squandered stock an' lim'—
Say you kin work an' don't need none,
An' he carn't, son.

"He ain' been use ter diggin'
His livin' out de dirt;
He carn't drink out a piggin,
Like you; an' it 'ud hurt
Ole Marster's pride, an' make him sw'ar,
In glory dar!"

Den all his strength seemed fallin';
He shet his eyes awhile,
An' den said: "Heish! he's callin'!
Dyar he! Now watch him smile!
Yes, suh—you niggers jes' stan' back!
Marster, here's Jack!"

## MARSE PHIL.

YES, yes, you is Marse Phil's son ; you favor 'm
might'ly, too.
We wuz like brothers, we wuz, me an' him.
You tried to fool d' ole nigger, but, Marster, 'twouldn'
do ;
Not do—yo' is done growed so tall an' slim.

Hi ! Lord ! Ise knowed yo', honey, sence long befo'
yo' born—
I mean, Ise knowed de *family* dat long ;
An' dee's been *white* folks, Marster—dee han's white
ez young corn—
An', ef dee want to, couldn' do no wrong.

You' gran'pa bought my mammy at Gen'l Nelson's sale,
An' Deely she come out de same estate ;
An' blood is jes' like pra'r is—hit tain' gwine nuver fail ;
Hit's sutney gwine to come out, soon or late.

When I wuz born, yo' gran'pa gi' me to young Marse Phil,
To be his body-servant—like, you know ;
An' we growed up together like two stalks in a hill—
Bofe tarslin' an' den shootin' in de row.

Marse Phil wuz born in harves', an' I dat Christmas come ;
My mammy nussed bofe on we de same time ;
No matter what one got, suh, de oder gwine git some—
We wuz two fibe-cent pieces in one dime.

We cotch ole hyahs together, an' possums, him an' me;
We fished dat mill-pon' over, night an' day;
Rid horses to de water; treed coons up de same tree;
An' when you see one, turr warn' fur away.

When Marse Phil went to College, 'twuz "Sam—Sam's got to go."
Ole Marster said, "Dat boy's a fool 'bout Sam."
Ole Mistis jes' said, "Dear, Phil wants him, an', you know——"
Dat "*Dear*"—hit used to soothe him like a lamb.

So we all went to College—'way down to Williamsburg—
But 'twarn' much l'arnin' out o' books we got;
Dem urrs warn' no mo' to him 'n a ole wormy lug;
Yes, suh, we wuz de ve'y top de pot.

An' ef he didn' study dem Latins an' sich things,
He wuz de popularetis all de while :
De ladies use' to call him, De angel widout wings ;
An' when he come, I lay dee use' to smile.

Yo' see, he wuz ole Marster's only chile ; an' den,
He had a *body-servant*—at he will ;
An' wid dat big plantation, dee'd all like to be brides ;
Dat is ef dee could have de groom, Marse Phil.

'Twuz dyah he met young Mistis—she wuz yo' ma, of co'se !
I disremembers now what mont' it wuz,
One night, he comes, an' seys he, " Sam, I needs new clo'es ;"
An' seys I, "Marse Phil, yes, suh, so yo' does."

Well, suh, he made de tailor meck ev'y thing bran' new ;
He wouldn' w'ar one stitch he had on han'—
Jes' throwed 'em in de chip box, an' seys, "Sam, dem's fur you."
Marse Phil, I tell yo', wuz a gentleman.

So Marse Phil co'tes de Mistis, an' Sam he co'tes de maid—
We always sot our traps upon one parf ;
An' when we tole ole Marster we bofe wuz gwine, he seyd,
"All right, we'll have to kill de fatted calf."

An' dat wuz what dee did, suh—de Prodigal wuz home ;
Dee put de ring an' robe upon yo' ma.
Den you wuz born, young Marster, an' den de storm hit come ;
An' den de darkness settled from afar.

De storm hit comed an' wrenchted de branches
from de tree—
De war—you' pa—he's sleep dyah on de hill;
An' do I know, young Marster, de war hit sot us
free?
I seys, "Dat's so; but tell me whar's Marse Phil?"

"A dollar!"—thankee, Marster, you sutney is his
son;
You is his spitt an' image, I declar'!
What sey, young Marster? Yes, suh, you sey, "It's
*five*—not one"—
Yo' favors, honey, bofe yo' pa an' ma!

## "HOME AGAIN."

De place is changed sence de ole times—
  Dis place whar I was born,
An' played, an' growed, an' lived, an' worked
  Amongst de yaller corn ;
De cabin-flo' is t'ared up now,
  De chimbley's tumblin' down,
An' I doesn't see de palin'-fence
  About de patch o' groun'.

But de sunshine 'pears ter be as bright,
  An' de birds as full o' song,
An' de bees as busy at dey work
  In de clover all day long.

So, spite o' de cabin's tumblin' down,
An' de ragged worrum fence,
De ole-time scenes comes back ag'in—
Ise missed 'em ev'ry sence.

I kin see my wife dar by de do',
Wid de baby on her knee ;
An' de tother chillun playin' here,
Whar de peach-tree used ter be.
But she is sleepin' on de hill,
Wid her baby on her breas' ;
An' de tother chillun's out dar, too,
All peacefully at res'.

De little branch runs on de same
As how it used ter run ;
Ise crossed it often to'des de night,
When arter my work was done ;

De Great House still is standin' dar,
Jes' over de tother side ;
But I hasn' been dar sence de day
My blessed Mistis died.

Ise wandered over de State, at large,
A-doin' what I could ;
Workin' de railroad, now an' den,
An' sometimes cuttin' wood.
It had been some years sence I was here ;
So, passin' by to-day,
I felt as how I mus' see de place,
An' so kim by dis way.

I'm sorry I kim : de ole glad days
Comes back so fresh ter me,
Dat it cuts my heart ter see de place
Ain't what it used ter be.

I'll never hear as onst I heerd,
In de happy times long gone,
De darkeys singin' like dey sung,
Amongst de yaller corn.

I'm goin' now. I ain't gwi' see
De ole home place no mo';
But I 'spec' I never shell forgit
My wife dar by de do',
Wid de little baby on her knee,
An' de chillun here at play;
I'll 'member de ole place like it was,
When I am fur away.

## ONE MOURNER.

(*For Irwin Russell, who died in New Orleans in great destitution, on Christmas Eve,* 1879.)

WELL, well, I declar'! I is sorry.
He's 'ceasted, yo' say, Marse Joe?—
Dat gent'man down in New Orleans,
Whar writ 'bout 'n niggers so,

An' tole, in all dat poetry
You read some time lars' year,
'Bout niggers, an' 'coons, an' 'possums,
An' ole times, an' mules an' gear?

Jes' name dat ag'in, seh, please, seh;
*Destrication's* de word yo' said?
Dat signifies he wuz mons'us *po'*,
Yo' say—want meat an' bread?

Hit mout: I never knowed him
Or hearn on him, 'sep' when you
Read me dem valentines o' his'n;
But I lay you, dis, seh's, true—

Dat he wuz a rael gent'man,
Bright fire dat burns, not smokes;
An' ef he did die *destricute*,
He warn't no po'-white-folks.

Dat gent'man knowed 'bout niggers.
Heah me! when niggers wuz
Ez good ez white-folks mos', seh,
I knows dat thing, I does.

An' he could 'a' tetched his hat, seh,
To me jes' de same ez you ;
An' folks gwine to see what a gent'man
He wuz, an' I wuz, too.

He couldn' 'a' talked so natchal
'Bout niggers in sorrow an' joy,
Widdouten he had a black mammy
To sing to him 'long ez a boy.

An' I think, when he tole 'bout black-folks
An' ole-times, an' all so sweet,
Some nigh him mout 'a' acted de ravins
An' gin him a mouf-ful to eat,

An' not let him starve at Christmas,
When things ain't sca'ce nowhar—
Ef he hed been a dog, young Marster,
I'd 'a feeded him den, I 'clar ' !

But wait! Maybe Gord, when thinkin'
How po' he'd been himself,
Cotch sight dat gent'man scufflin',
An' 'lowed fur to see what wealf

Hit mout be de bes' to gin him,
Ez a Christmas gif', yo' know;
So he jes' took him up to heaven,
Whar he carn' be po' no mo'.

An' jes' call his name ag'in, seh.
How?—IRWIN RUSSELL—so?
I'se gwine fur to tell it to Nancy,
So ef I'd furgit, she'd know.

An' I hopes dey lay him to sleep, seh,
Somewhar, whar de birds will sing
About him de live-long day, seh,
An' de flowers will bloom in Spring.

An' I wish, young Marster, you'd meck out
To write down to whar you said,
An' sey, dyar's a nigger in Richmond
Whar's sorry Marse Irwin's dead.

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